

North Briarcliff Civic Association



The Official Newsletter of the
North Briarcliff Civic Association

January-March 2022

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THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

by Andrew Heaton, NBCA President

The last few years have felt like a roller coaster that has brought about unending changes for all of us. A few months into the pandemic, businesses large and small shifted employers to working from their homes. At the time, it felt like this was going to be a temporary adjustment to a momentary health crisis. Nearly two years into the COVID Era, we now realize that many workers will never go back to their offices, at least not in the ways they once knew. Businesses realized that workers could be just as efficient at home, and the businesses could save on office-space rental. Workers realized they could get their jobs done without losing time with their families and friends to the traffic lines of I-285.



Around the corner, we have a constant reminder of just how much has changed. The Regal Hollywood Cinemas off I-85N used to be constantly packed with cars and people every night of the weekend, and even many weeknights. For the past year and a half, the theater has sat mostly shuttered. It has recently re-opened, but even now, the number of people gathering at movie theaters is a fraction of what it used to be pre-pandemic. Now movies are released directly to streaming platforms. The state of the movie industry most likely will never be what it once was, and, depending on who you ask, the consumer may be the biggest winner in that evolution.

Not all changes, however, are related to the pandemic. Here locally in our neighborhood, we are watching the changing of our literal landscape along Cravey Drive, as Georgia Power pulls down trees all along the north side of the street to make way for the installment of larger (and necessary) power poles. Trees that have dotted the street and neighborhood for decades, even generations, are gone forever to make way for progress in the electrical grid.

These changes along Cravey pale in comparison to the biggest change on the horizon in North Briarcliff. As you may know, our neighborhood association uses the Hawthorne Elementary School footprint as our membership zone. As we speak, the DeKalb County School System is looking at a plan that will eventually tear down the current Hawthorne Elementary School and replace it with a much larger building. This building will house not only the current Hawthorne students, but will bring over through merger the students of Henderson Mill. Look for an article later in this newsletter from one of our newest board members talking about this plan in detail.

Changes may be scary. They may cause us to be apprehensive, nervous, and full of angst. Throughout the last two years, it is likely not a coincidence that conversations about mental health throughout society have been on the rise. Here locally, these changes may cause questions about the future of our neighborhood, traffic patterns, home values, etc. It is, of course, impossible to know what the exact future may hold.

However, no matter what, the North Briarcliff Civic Association (NBCA) will look to continue to be a voice for our neighborhood, an advocate for the residents throughout the area, a source of information, and a connector to bring together different aspects and agents of change to ensure that our neighborhood continues to move in the direction of a future that benefits and rewards the character of this little slice of Metro Atlanta that we all love.

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APPLICATION DEADLINE:
Half Day
3 - 5 year olds
January 10, 2022



APPLICATION DEADLINE:
Kindergarten - 12th
February 1, 2022

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North Briarcliff



Civic Association

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Name: _____ Phone (in case of questions): _____

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I am (We are) interested in helping NBCA with (Circle any of the following):

Newsletter or Website Layout or Updating

Member Recruitment and Benefits

Neighborhood Watch

Board Service

Membership in the NBCA is open for all residents and owners of property within the Hawthorne Elementary School district and residents on other bordering streets who may request inclusion.

The North Briarcliff Civic Association (NBCA) represents you. A civic association is an organization that exists to improve the neighborhood through volunteer work by members of the association. The purpose and mission of the NBCA is to promote the civic interests of the people living in our area. What this means is that this association is dedicated to informing, representing, and supporting the residents of our area in issues of public concern.

Membership in the NBCA is voluntary and is open to any resident or property owner within the Hawthorne Elementary School District and to other residents living on bordering streets who request inclusion. The newsletter is addressed to “Current Resident” to ensure that the newsletter is delivered (free of charge) to every house and condominium in the NBCA area as a service to all the residents.

We want you to help us become better representatives. As our paid membership increases, we have greater authority and leverage in dealing with (or confronting) the county and other organizations on your behalf. Renew your membership or become a member by paying your annual dues. The \$25 dues covers the household for the calendar year (January-December 2022).

Help us to better represent the interests of our neighborhood by bringing to our attention any issues or events that merit our attention. We would appreciate your perspective, and you may know more or care more about

that issue than any board or off-board member. Consider joining the board or advising the board as an off-board member so that the association is better able to address the issue in question. We would welcome your assistance, enthusiasm and expertise.

The NBCA is a non-profit organization that is managed by its board members, all of whom are neighbors who have volunteered to work together to make a difference in our local community. All of the board members are elected by the dues-paying members of the NBCA at an annual meeting in the fall. Some board members have special interests and expertise in specific areas that are important to our area, while other board members are generalists. The board members are supported by off-board members, who are neighbors who have volunteered to help the board by identifying and addressing specific areas. None of the board or off-board members receive any monetary payment for their efforts.

If you want to report something or register a complaint with the county or other agencies, the board may be able to assist you or help you contact appropriate agencies. However, you are responsible for making your report or registering your complaint. Please remember that board and off-board members are volunteers with only so much time and energy.

Email addresses for board and off-board members are listed on the front page of each newsletter and are also found on the NBCA website www.northbriarcliff.org

FIGHT BACK! WE WANT A BETTER SCHOOL NOT A BIGGER SCHOOL!

by Art Hansen

Tell the School District to keep its promise to upgrade Hawthorne School's infrastructure. For years, we have voted to provide SPLOST funding for the School District to build and maintain county schools. (SPLOST means a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax.) For years, the School District promised to use earlier SPLOST funding to maintain and upgrade Hawthorne Elementary School.

Now the School District wants to adopt a new Master Plan that would tear down Hawthorne School and build a much bigger elementary school (for 900 or more students) on the Hawthorne site. That new big school would hold all the students who now go to Hawthorne (est. 400 students) and Henderson Mill (est. 600) Elementary Schools.

We Oppose the Construction of a New 900+ Student Elementary School

The North Briarcliff Civic Association (NBCA) agrees with the Hawthorne Elementary School PTA, Principal's Advisory Council, Hawthorne Foundation Boards, current, past, and future Hawthorne parents, and Lakeside, Henderson, and Coralwood communities. Building a new 900+ seat elementary school to educate our children is not what our communities need or want.

Please read and sign our petition opposing the Hawthorne/Henderson Mill Elementary Merger

STOP THE MERGE at <https://chnq.it/RQKP8L6csT>



Signs are posted in the Hawthorne area.

Quality of Education

The School District's Master Plan does not mention or discuss the quality of education and whether children would learn as well in a much larger elementary school. A lot of educational research notes the advantages of smaller neighborhood

schools. The advantages may be summarized as follows:

- ✓ Students are at the center of the school.
- ✓ Discipline is usually not a serious problem, resulting in an increase in time spent learning.
- ✓ Teachers still have a sense of control over what and how they teach.
- ✓ A minimum of bureaucracy allows for more flexibility in decision making.
- ✓ Low pupil-teacher ratios allow for more individualized instruction and more attention given to students.
- ✓ Relationships among students, teachers, administrators, and school board members tend to be closer.
- ✓ Parental and community involvement tends to be stronger than in larger schools.

The Hawthorne PTA, PAC, and Foundation Board have written a position paper expressing their opposition to the destruction of the current school and construction of a much larger school. That paper notes that smaller schools are proving to be the best approach for our children and for future generations. The paper also provides links to articles that outline research in support of smaller schools.

"In recent years, researchers have discovered that the cost savings provided by large schools have had a negative effect on student achievement and graduation rates. As schools get bigger, student achievement declines and larger schools have higher rates of absenteeism, dropouts and discipline problems."

"In addition, small schools spent 17 percent less per student than comparable schools in their districts while achieving equivalent or better results."

<https://hawthornees.memberhub.com/public/uploads/5fb84181-23ae-4d98-abe9-1a82d183d1b9>

The position paper details other objections to the proposed construction of a large school on the Hawthorne site. The following briefly summarizes some of the major points that are covered in much greater detail in the position paper.

Traffic and congestion. Due to the obvious effects on traffic and congestion, the paper requests that DeKalb County School District provide a comprehensive Traffic Impact Study to include the Briarcliff Subdivision and the surrounding major roads (Briarcliff Road, Shallowford Road, etc.).

Space. The Hawthorne Elementary site is too small for a 900-seat mega school. Georgia Department of Education guidelines state that a school that size requires at least 14 acres. The Hawthorne property is listed as only 12.3 acres, and two sides are heavily forested (with a nature trail) while the other two sides are steep hills.

Cost. The proposed construction is much more expensive. Earlier, SPLOST had promised \$11.5 million to refurbish both schools -- \$7 million for Henderson Mill and \$4.5 million for Hawthorne, which would cover all repairs and should sustain the well-designed Hawthorne building for another 25 years. The new Master Plan proposes to spend three times more money -- \$34 million tearing down Hawthorne, building the new large school, and remodeling Henderson Mill as a possible early learning center. Because of these costs, the paper requests that DeKalb County School District provide a comprehensive 10-year financial cost analysis to show a cost comparison between keeping the existing Hawthorne and Henderson Mill buildings, with ESPLOST V improvements, versus building a new 900-seat facility.

Importance of Community. Hawthorne School is a center of our community, and Henderson Mill School is undoubtedly a center of that community. Many of the residents in this community grew up here and moved back specifically because it was, and is, a wonderful place to raise your children. Covid-19 has certainly re-enforced the extreme need for community. Our community will be damaged by replacing Hawthorne with a mega school that has so many students coming from elsewhere, and, of course, the Henderson Mill community will be damaged by losing its elementary school.

Finally, we cannot have five more years of buckets in the hallway and toilets that do not work while waiting for a new building. That is unacceptable. Plumbing systems and fixtures and the heating and air conditioning systems have reached their end of their lives. The School District has to utilize its SPLOST funds to maintain its good schools.

SAVE DEKALB COUNTY FROM MAJOR PDK AIRPORT EXPANSION!

by Larry Foster, Communications Director, DPK Watch Inc.

Our petition opposes the dramatic expansion of the DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK) that would be authorized in the proposed PDK Master Plan, now under consideration by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners. This expansion concerns all residents in the North Briarcliff area since most of us live about two miles (as the jet flies) from PDK Airport, the second busiest airport in Georgia after Hartsfield-Jackson. Expanding the numbers of large jet operations at PDK Airport, in particular, could negatively impact our lives. Please look closely at our petition and, if you agree with it, sign and share it as widely as possible with your friends and neighbors.

Please Read and Sign the Petition at: <https://chnng.it/CJ4THKy8Tg>

The DeKalb-Peachtree Airport (PDK) Master Plan released in late September 2021 authorizes *the most dramatic expansion in PDK Airport's history in numbers of flights, sizes of aircraft, and numbers of larger jets* based at PDK. Tens of thousands of individuals and households near PDK already are negatively impacted by airport noise, pollution, relative loss of home values, and reduced quality of life in a densely populated residential area surrounding Georgia's largest General Aviation airport. The new PDK Master Plan, if implemented, will greatly increase already damaging environmental impacts of PDK operations. Major public policy and environmental issues are at stake here that must be thoroughly investigated by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners—with significant input from all stakeholders, not just supporters of PDK expansion—before a vote is held on whether or not to approve the Plan.

We oppose the proposed PDK Master Plan in its current form for the following reasons and ask for your support by signing our petition:

- 1) The proposed Master Plan would authorize a 40% increase in aircraft to be based at PDK by adding new hangars and tie-downs. Adding so many more PDK-based aircraft will significantly increase the numbers of disruptive flights over residential neighborhoods. Each aircraft based at PDK averages 125 operations annually (according to the Technical Report, Tables 3-11 & 16), so all the added PDK-based aircraft - many of them very noisy jets - would result in 18,130 more flights each year. DeKalb County has the authority to approve or disapprove all expansion of PDK facilities to accommodate aircraft based at the Airport; exercising that authority is the only way in which the number of flight operations at PDK Airport can be controlled to protect surrounding neighborhoods. This historic expansion of facilities should not be included in the Master Plan.
- 2) The “Critical Aircraft” around which future PDK planning under the Master Plan will be based is a Gulfstream 550, a 91,000-lb. business jet that currently cannot even operate at PDK without weight restrictions. Jets of that size also cannot use PDK Airport on a regular basis under *legally binding assurances made by the FAA and DeKalb County* when the main PDK runway was extended by 1,000 feet without conducting a Federally required full Environmental Impact Study (EIS). Since the Gulfstream 550 officially weighs 25,000 lbs. more than the long-standing 66,000-lb. weight limit, it also cannot be used as the “Critical Aircraft” for future PDK Airport planning and design.

- 3) The proposed Master Plan must not be approved without completion of the full and credible Environmental Study of noise and pollution impacts from airport activity and from jets larger than the 66,000-lb. weight limit. Instead, the PDK Administration is seeking rapid approval of the Master Plan before completion of the study, which is in-progress in cooperation with the EPA, the FAA, PDK and Open DeKalb, Inc. That study must first be finished and carefully assessed before (not after) the DeKalb County Commissioners vote on the proposed PDK Master Plan or send it back for revisions to protect the residents of DeKalb County.

- 4) Direct PDK Airport operations must not be expanded beyond the Airport's original 800-acre fenced perimeter into the 15 acres of land (the “Southwest Quadrant”) that PDK Airport bought out during the 1990s because airport noise there rendered the area “unfit for human habitation.” PDK's proposed Master Plan Airport Layout Plan would expand the airport's fenced perimeter into that buy-out land to build eight new hangars housing 16 jets. That would bring direct PDK operations closer to adjacent residential areas, directly contradicting the purpose of the FAA-approved land buy-out. The largest expansion of operations would be in the proposed “East Operations” area, where 129 more aircraft would be housed in hangars on what is now green space occupied by soon-to-be-obsolete navigational equipment. This expansion, along with expansion into the SW Quad buffer area, would guarantee the major growth of flight operations closer to sensitive neighborhoods.

Pressing issues of global warming, environmental justice, and economic inequity are closely tied to DeKalb County's decision regarding a large expansion of airport operations that would primarily benefit wealthy jet owners and corporations while damaging the surrounding human environment. Will DeKalb County be on the wrong side of history by supporting growth causing environmental degradation, or will the County be willing to “think outside the box” and become an innovative leader in exploring new and creative ways in which PDK's valuable open land can be used to achieve both economic progress and responsible environmental stewardship? For example, why not consider installing environmentally friendly uses for the large and soon-to-be-available “East Ops” green space like carbon-sequestration facilities or solar-panel installations that could make money by supplying clean energy for the airport?

For these and other reasons, we strongly oppose approval of the proposed PDK Master Plan by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners without significant changes to protect our citizenry.

PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION TODAY AND FORWARD IT TO FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS! <https://chnng.it/CJ4THKy8Tg>

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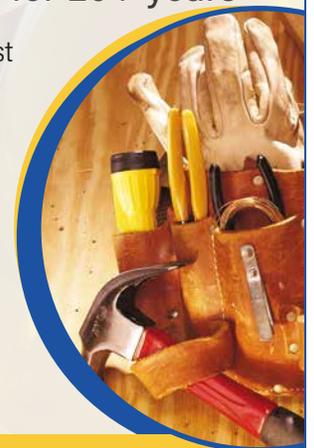
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MARY SCOTT NATURE PARK IS A CERTIFIED WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

by Alex LoCastro (Georgia Audubon) alex.locastro@georgiaudubon.org

Georgia Audubon congratulates Mary Scott Nature Park on becoming a Certified Wildlife Sanctuary!

Georgia Audubon's Wildlife Sanctuary Program recognizes and encourages property owners to provide critical wildlife habitat and create a safe-haven for wildlife and people by planting native plants, removing or controlling non-native invasive species, and providing food, water, and shelter. The goal is to create a network of certified wildlife sanctuaries across Georgia to counter the loss and degradation of wildlife habitat.

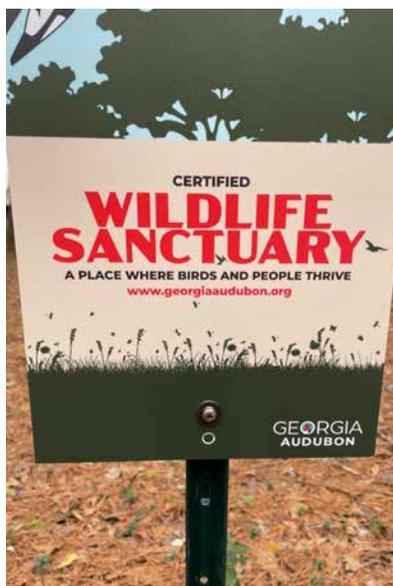
(See <https://www.georgiaudubon.org/wildlife-sanctuary-program.html>)



The park's main entrance and parking lot are on Briarcliff Road.

Georgia Audubon cannot thank the Friends of the Park enough for supporting our mission to build places where birds and people thrive. Your certified sanctuary directly supports a wide range of native animals and the larger ecosystems of which these animals are a part. Thank you for sharing this space with us and with the wildlife!

I had a wonderful time meeting Friends of the Park and walking the park's trails. It is clear to me that everyone involved has put in a great deal of work to transform the space into what it is today. I applaud you on the work you have managed to complete thus far, and I look forward to hearing about the park's future improvements. I will be sure to visit again this spring to check out all the trillium when it comes back.



This Certified Wildlife Sanctuary sign has been erected in Mary Scott Nature Park.

As we walked along the trails, I was pleased to see all of the native species name tags that have been put out there. This was how I initially learned my native plants, and I think the tags will be a wonderful tool for teaching local children about these plants and their importance.

The Importance of Native Plants

I was really impressed by the plant diversity we were able to see even though winter was upon us and many of the plants had lost their leaves. A high level of species richness is always good to see, and I particularly loved how all the different layers of the forest were well represented. Many properties that we evaluate in Atlanta have a great canopy of native trees, but then little diversity beneath that layer.

There is sometimes an over-reliance on trees to provide everything needed for birds and insects, when the reality is that many of our native fauna need everything from grasses to ferns to wildflowers to vines to shrubs to mid-story trees and canopy trees in order to complete their life cycles. I encourage you to continue diversifying the park however possible so that even more wildlife can make use of it in the future.

Native cultivars are important, but they can be less useful to insect herbivores and pollinators than their wild counterparts. A native cultivar is almost certainly better than a non-native ornamental plant, but can sometimes be far less useful to wildlife than a truly native plant. For this reason, we always recommend planting unmodified native plants as they are guaranteed to be recognized as food plants by our native fauna.

Invasive Plants

Invasive plant species are always a major problem. One of our requirements to be certified as a sanctuary is that invasive species must make up less than 25% of the total certified area. While we did find quite a few invasives during the assessment of Mary Scott, their total footprint in the park is small enough. If Friends of the Park and other volunteers had not put so much work into the park, the percentage of invasive plants would be considerably higher.

It seemed like many of these invasives were concentrated toward the north end of the park where it meets the creek. Creekside areas can be some of the most difficult areas to rid of invasive species as many invasives (such as privet) spread rapidly along waterways, and their removal could cause some erosion if you are not careful. These last few areas can be the hardest to tackle, especially when they are physically separated from areas where trucks can come in and haul away the removed plant material. This is the case for the north end of the park. I encourage you to keep working to ensure that the invasive population does not bounce back in the years to come.

I am listing all of the invasive species I spotted so that you may reference this list in the future. They are: Chinese privet, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese holly, bamboo, false strawberry, English ivy, Wisteria, Liriope/monkeygrass, mondo grass and Japanese pachysandra. Unfortunately, many of these are quite noxious, with the worst likely being the ivy, Wisteria, Liriope, privet, and bamboo. For that reason, I would prioritize the removal of those species before moving on to the others.

continued on next page

MARY SCOTT NATURE PARK IS A CERTIFIED WILDLIFE SANCTUARY *CONT'D*

Mechanical removal methods are always best, and you should always make sure to tamp down disturbed soil and cover open soil with leaf litter. For woody invasives, you might consider doing cut-stump herbicide treatments for plants that cannot be easily dug out. I do not recommend any foliar herbicide spraying as this is likely to affect non-target species and should only be applied by licensed professionals.

Other Environmental Features of Mary Scott

Other important environmental features include food sources, cover and nesting sources, and water sources. I think the park does well to naturally provide all of these for the local wildlife at the levels that we hope to see. I encourage you to (1) continue repurposing fallen wood to delineate trails as you currently do and to (2) allow as much standing dead wood (snags) as possible to remain standing. We recommend making determinations about a tree's health during the growing season so that healthy dormant trees are not cut down in the winter.

If a tree has to be cut down for the safety of trailgoers, our recommendation is to leave as much of the trunk still standing as possible, even if it is only 10 or 20 feet. Snags are an incredibly important resource for our native birds, with over 30 species making use of them for nests in the state of Georgia. Non-threatening snags are often removed from residential properties, which makes it all the more important for them to remain in our city's parks.

I had a great time exploring the woods in Mary Scott Nature Park. The Friends of the Park should be proud of what you've managed to accomplish thus far!

Editor's Note: You are invited to come and work with the Friends of Mary Scott Nature Park to help our local wildlife sanctuary. On January 17th the Friends will host an MLK, Jr. Day of Service with a morning work session (10 a.m. to noon) and an afternoon session (2-4 p.m.). The Friends usually meet the first Saturday of every month to work for two hours to remove non-native plants from the park. In September and October, the Friends were assisted by Chamblee High School Honor Society students. In December, the Friends were assisted by 69 Lakeside High School Honor Society students and two Boy Scouts with their fathers.

Resources

Below is a list of resources, though I know that the Friends of the Park are already familiar with quite a few of these. When sourcing plants, remember that cultivars are always listed as Latin names followed by the cultivar name in single quotation marks (ex: *Agastache* 'Blue Fortune').

Want to learn more about native plants, wildlife sanctuaries, and birds:

- <https://gnps.org>
- <http://usinggeorgianativeplants.blogspot.com>
- <https://ebird.org/home>
- <https://ebird.org/quiz>
- <https://www.inaturalist.org>
- <https://www.gainvasives.org/species/weeds>
- <https://nestwatch.org>

Native plant providers include:

- <https://beechhollowfarms.com>
- <https://www.nightsongnatives.com>
- <https://www.nearlynativenursery.com>
- <https://gnps.org/georgias-native-plants/sources-native-plants>

Native Plant Sales:

- State Botanical Garden
- Chattahoochee Nature Center
- Georgia Audubon
- Trees Atlanta

Looking to learn more about native plants and which might be best for you?

- National Audubon's Plants for Birds plant finder (<https://www.audubon.org/PLANTSFORBIRDS>) allows you to enter your zip code and get a number of natives to filter through.
- <https://www.wildflower.org/plants> is a great site to look up each plant and see some of their requirements.
- Another great site to visit is <https://www.naturalcommunitiesofgeorgia.com/piedmont.html> based on the great book about Georgia's Natural Communities. Here you can find some great recommendations for native plants.
- In regard to pollinator plants, you can check out the list on Dawson County Woman's Club page as they have done some great work. (<http://dawsoncountywomansclub.org/native-plants-for-pollinators/#recommendnativeplants>).

Looking for native plant landscapers/consultations?

- <https://www.backyardwildlifehabitatsga.com>
- <https://beechhollowfarms.com/native-plants/consultation>
- <https://atlntativescapes.com/services>
- <https://gnps.org/georgias-native-plants/landscape-designers>

Looking for help with the removal of non-native invasive species?

- <https://www.ecologicatl.com>
- <http://www.rayeallc.com>
- <https://reforestatl.business.site>

Our Sanctuary webpage lists more resources:

- <https://www.georgiaaudubon.org/sanctuary-resources.html>

LEARN ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBORS

by Art Hansen

We see many of our neighbors mowing their lawns (now blowing or raking leaves) – walking their dogs – driving by in their cars. But do we know or think about their histories? Who knows the stories they could tell.

Here's a story about our neighbor, Phyllis Miller, who just celebrated her 99th birthday. Happy Birthday, Phyllis!!

Phyllis Miller told this story to her grandson years ago

During World War Two, I participated in a secretive government cryptology (writing and solving codes) program that has since become the subject of many books and a few movies.

In the Pacific theater, both the Americans and the Japanese used coded messages and cipher machines for protection and surprise. Secrecy was most important. The terrible attack on Pearl Harbor succeeded because it was a surprise.

By June of 1942, American cryptologists had made progress and were intercepting and reading some of the Japanese coded messages. The Japanese planned a surprise attack on Midway Island, but the Americans learned about that attack and were able to defend the island. This was one of the most important victories in the Pacific.

The American coding system was too slow and was being broken by the Japanese. One interesting American solution was to use the Navajo language as a code. Each battalion would employ two operators (one to send, one to receive messages) who spoke both Navajo and English. This language was so dissimilar to other languages that the enemy was never able to decode the messages.

In 1944, I had just finished college. I wanted to help in the war effort rather than be a teacher. The exciting jobs were in Washington, D.C. I applied for and was accepted to work in the signal corps of the War Department as a cryptologist. After training, I became a reader. The job of readers was to find the keys in the Japanese code books in order to read their coded messages.

Each reader was given 10 to 20 coded messages every day (numbers in groups of four). Then it was a matter of guessing and shifting, much like working a crossword puzzle. Although we did not know Japanese, we knew which numbers for words were used frequently and which numbers might come before or after those words. The messages were put in columns. When one message was read, we could read others. Then we would know one of the keys on the page.

During the first few weeks of doing this work, my head was always filled with numbers. I slept with them, ate with them, and thought about them all the time. Eventually, I knew the frequently used numbers by heart.

By the end of 1945, the Japanese code books and numbers were finally recovered. The war was over, and we readers were no longer needed. But we had participated in a very important secret service.

What's Your Story or History?

Let us know if you want to share a story with your neighbors. We live in a great neighborhood, and I bet many of us have interesting stories to tell. Sharing stories might be a great way to survive the grey days of the pandemic.



Phyllis Miller was a codebreaker in 1941



After the war, Phyllis was a flight attendant for Capitol Airlines

REVIEWING DEKALB COUNTY'S CITIZEN BOARDS

by the DeKalb Citizens Advocacy Council

The DeKalb Citizens Advocacy Council (DCAC) (<https://dekalbcitizens.org/>) is a group of community members from all parts of DeKalb County, Georgia. Our goal is to educate the citizens of DeKalb County about county governance issues and to advocate for informed citizen engagement in local government. We have great concerns about compliance and transparency in county operations, and we support legislation to improve both. For example, during the 2019 and 2020 Georgia legislative sessions, we successfully advocated to maintain the independence and strength of the Board of Ethics and the Ethics Officer position.

Volunteer citizen boards are an integral part of local government. Participating in these boards and paying attention to what they are doing is critical to ensuring good governance. Our recent experience with the Board of Ethics appointment process and the interest DeKalb citizens showed in applying for that board led us to question how other DeKalb County boards were being appointed and how citizens were being educated about and engaged with County government through these boards.

Our Research

To answer our questions, we spent eight months and approximately 100 person-hours of internet research, virtual attendance at selected board meetings, and review of “best practices” elsewhere in the country. Using DeKalb County’s official website, DCAC leaders identified 49 boards, commissions, and task forces. Finding accurate, current information about these boards’ membership and activities proved to be challenging and time consuming.

Please note that our information on vacancies and expired terms came from an official DeKalb County Government website. The County maintains this site and is responsible for any updates about membership and terms of service. DCAC makes no claims as to the accuracy of the County’s board/commission data for vacancies or expired terms.

Our Report

On October 25, 2021, we presented our 40-page report to Mr. Thurmond (DeKalb’s CEO) and the Board of County Commissioners. The report contained our observations and recommendations as they relate to:

- 1) Improving the transparency of board information, policies and procedures and
- 2) Clarifying board types, functions, and appointing authorities.

We still have more questions than answers about how these boards are appointed and how they function. What we have found so far indicates that little public attention is being paid to these boards by either County officials or DeKalb citizens. The work of the boards is not being highlighted through County communication sources or at Board of Commission meetings. The boards often work in isolation and without strong guidance or support from elected leaders.

DCAC leaders hope that our report will start a conversation and drive improvements in the way DeKalb County establishes, manages, and engages with citizen boards. We deserve better citizen engagement opportunities, and County government deserves our attention and participation.

While we move forward with our research on this topic, we encourage people to review the overview of County boards that we created. <https://dekalbcitizens.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Final-Report-102521.pdf>

Serving on a Board

Our overview of County boards outlines the boards that exist, who currently is assigned to serve on those boards, and the number of vacancies or expired terms. If you are interested in serving on any of the boards, we encourage you to go to our website where we provide guidance about how to access more information about the board and how to apply. We also advise sending a copy of your application with a letter of interest to the County Commissioners for your district and super district.

Our Recommendations to the County

Our recommendations were not intended to be critical of any one person or position. We want to generate greater citizen participation in local county government. Our recommendations were focused on challenging the County’s elected leaders to envision better ways of engaging, communicating, and working through these boards to improve county governance.

We recommended that the County implement the following:

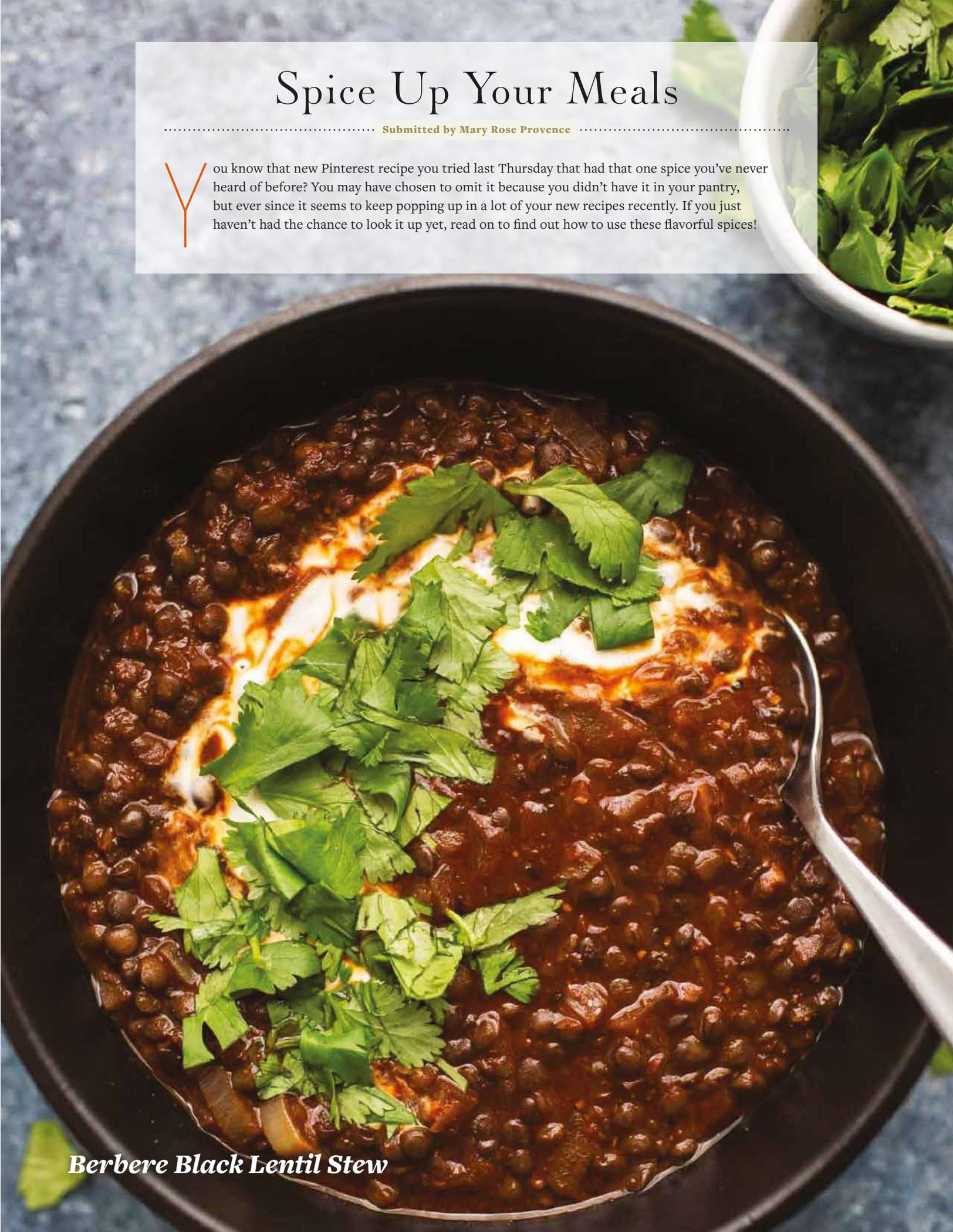
- Regularly review and update or replace the current Granicus (integrated software) system to ensure accurate and thorough information is easily accessible to the public.
- Communicate board meeting notices and agendas through a central online calendar and regular media sources.
- Create consistent guidelines and procedures for establishing, appointing, operating, and assessing boards.
- Clearly communicate the purpose of each board.
- Improve public reporting of board activity and outcomes, as well as board vacancies.
- Publicize board appointment opportunities.
- Orient new board members and, as applicable, provide professional training to board members.
- Revise Section 13(A) of the DeKalb Organizational Act to address the fact that there is no timetable prescribed for the CEO’s action of nomination, which means vacancies may go unfilled for an unspecified length of time.

We believe there are many citizens with talent, skills, experience, and energy ready to serve DeKalb County, but until resources are dedicated to revitalizing the expectations, transparency, and administration of citizen boards, there is no guarantee that new individuals will be tapped for service and that their service will be meaningful to them or to the County.

Spice Up Your Meals

Submitted by Mary Rose Provence

You know that new Pinterest recipe you tried last Thursday that had that one spice you've never heard of before? You may have chosen to omit it because you didn't have it in your pantry, but ever since it seems to keep popping up in a lot of your new recipes recently. If you just haven't had the chance to look it up yet, read on to find out how to use these flavorful spices!



Berberere Black Lentil Stew

TAJIN

This blend of chili peppers, dehydrated lime, and sea salt was brought to the United States in 1993 but has recently risen in popularity the past few years. It originates from Mexico where they use the spice to flavor fruit, and it was originally named “Tajín Clásico” but the name has become shortened over time. Nowadays the spice is used on almost any food to give it that extra kick of spice and citrus.

Grilled Chicken with Orange and Cilantro

(from [tajin.com](#))

Ingredients

- 8 bone-in chicken thighs (about 3 pounds) skin removed.
- 2 tablespoons TAJÍN®
- 1/2 cup fresh cilantro leaves, minced
- 1 teaspoon orange zest
- 1 small yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 orange, sliced
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1/3-cup limejuice
- 1/4 cup canola oil



Directions

1. In a large glass-baking dish, season chicken generously with TAJÍN® on both sides. Sprinkle on the cilantro and orange zest. Next, layer the onion slices on top of the cilantro as evenly as possible, then pour the lemon and lime juices over the chicken. Drizzle the oil over the chicken and cover the dish with plastic wrap. Refrigerate for 4 hours, turning the chicken after about 2 hours.
2. Set an outdoor grill to medium heat or preheat an indoor grill pan over medium heat. Toss the chicken in the marinade once more to make sure the oil is incorporated—this will not only help your chicken to crisp up beautifully, but it will also prevent it from sticking to your grill.
3. Remove the chicken from the marinade and place it on the grill with the onion slices and a few orange wedges if you like. Cook for 5 to 10 minutes on each side, until the internal temperature reaches 165°F.
4. Remove it from the heat to a platter and serve.

BERBERE

Berberere translates to pepper in Ethiopian and the name definitely makes sense. This spice is a perfect blend of chili pepper, garlic, ginger, and basil. It is often used in stews and meat marinades but it can also be used on fruits and salads. It goes well with almost any dish by adding a little heat and pepper to your meal.

Berberere Black Lentil Stew

(from [naturallyella.com](#))

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium yellow onion (minced)
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger (minced)
- 3 to 4 tablespoons Berbere Spice
- 1 cup uncooked black lentils
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 to 2 cups waters
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce
- Juice from 1/2 lemon (plus extra for serving)
- Salt (to taste)
- Toppings
- Yogurt (for topping)
- Cilantro (for topping)

Directions

Heat a pot or dutch oven over medium heat. Add the olive oil followed by the minced onion. Cook until the onion is translucent, 5 to 6 minutes. Add in the ginger and cook for a minute more.

Measure in 3 tablespoons of the berbere spice and stir to coat the onions. Add in the black lentils followed by the vegetable broth and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, cover, and cook for about 25 minutes. Check and stir occasionally, adding water as needed.

Once lentils are mostly tender, stir in the tomato sauce and lemon. Continue to cook for another 5 to 10 minutes until lentils are tender. Taste and add more berbere seasoning, lemon juice, or salt as needed.

TURMERIC

This bitter spice originates from Asia and is most known for being an ingredient in curry. It's very similar to ginger and is used in Southeast Asian, Indian, and Middle Eastern cooking. One of its main ingredients, Curcumin, is known for helping fight inflammation and is high in antioxidants. This spice would be a great addition to any meat or vegetable dish.

Creamy Turmeric Soup

(from [cooking.nytimes.com](#))

Ingredients

- 1 pound spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 large shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground turmeric
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 2 cups lightly packed freshly grated Parmesan (about 4 ounces), plus more for serving
- 4 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley or chives



Directions

Cook spaghetti according to package instructions. Reserve 1 cup pasta cooking water and drain.

Meanwhile, melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add shallot and garlic, season with salt and pepper and cook, stirring, until golden-brown, 3 to 4 minutes. Add turmeric and stir to toast, about 30 seconds. Slowly whisk in the half-and-half then bring to a simmer.

Whisk in the 2 cups Parmesan, then add the cooked spaghetti and all of the reserved pasta cooking liquid and toss to coat. Serve with chopped parsley and more Parmesan.



Article by Mary Rose Provence. I am a current senior at the University of Georgia studying the field of Advertising with the pursuit of a Master's in

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